

U.S. Application No.: 'NEW'
PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

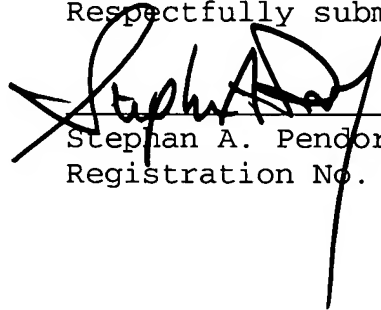
Attorney Docket: 3926.069

REMARKS

The claims have been amended in order to eliminate multiple dependent claims and claims improperly depending from multiple dependent claims, and to otherwise conform the claims to U.S. practice. Care has been taken to ensure that no new matter is added to the text.

Entry and favorable consideration prior to consideration are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: **March 1, 2004**

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EXPRESS MAIL CERTIFICATE

"EXPRESS MAIL" MAILING LABEL NUMBER: **EV392067891US**

DATE OF DEPOSIT: **March 1, 2004**

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing Preliminary Amendment and a stamped receipt post card are being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 C.F.R. §1.10 on the date indicated and is addressed: **ATTN: Mail Stop PATENT APPLICATION, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.**

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required at any time during the prosecution of this application without specific authorization, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account Number 16-0877.


Bonnie L. Horst

REPLACEMENT ABSTRACT

With many coated plates, in particular zinc and organic coated sheet metal as are employed in the automobile industry, the coating material has a significantly lower boiling point than the melting point of the sheet metal material. Therefore, in the case of laser welding of this type of sheet metal when there is no gap in the overlapping contact area to be joined, an explosion-like vaporization of coating material occurs, which takes along molten sheet metal material, strongly degrading the quality of the joint. The invention provides a process in which by means of a single laser beam first all plates can be de-coated, and thereafter the plates are welded along the de-coated area with the same laser beam.